

Chicago, IL - During a U.S. Congressional field meeting held at the Shedd Aquarium, Congressman Kirk (R-Highland Park) warned of growing threats to Lake Michigan and urged passage of bipartisan legislation he co-authored with Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Chicago) to protect the Great Lakes.

The *Great Lakes Restoration Act* focuses federal aid on key issues, including cleaning up Areas of Contamination (AOCs), halting the spread of invasive species, cutting pollution, protecting wetlands and saving critical coastal habitats. The bill provides four billion dollars over the next five years for restoration efforts.

"Congress must lead in protecting the crown jewel of the Midwest's ecosystem," said Kirk. "The federal government committed \$8 billion to the restoration of the Everglades in Florida. The time has come to match that effort in the Great Lakes."

The congressional roundtable, hosted by Energy & Water Subcommittee Chairman John Duncan and Ranking Democratic Congressman Jerry Costello, focused on funding the barrier in the Calumet River protecting Lake Michigan from the Asian carp and shoreline restoration projects. Participating in the discussions were Mayor Daley, Rep. Rahm Emanuel, Deputy EPA Administrator Tom Skinner and regional leaders from the Army Corps of Engineers.

The roundtable highlighted progress made on the Great Lakes, including proposals to triple federal funding for the *Great Lakes Legacy Act* to clean up contaminated harbors such as the Waukegan Area of Concern.

Kirk highlighted the growing threat to our Great Lakes. "Mercury pollution has a severe impact on the health of our people," said Kirk. "Pregnant women in Illinois now show tests with 14 times background mercury level in their blood. We have a statewide fish advisory warning people to limit their consumption. The federal government cannot afford to put off action to protect our people. The time to act is now. Congress must clearly define a broad restoration effort, backed by pollution controls to protect Lake Michigan. We need legislation that can reach the President's desk sooner, rather than later."

The implementation of the *Clean Water Act* achieved considerable progress in reducing water pollution in the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Restoration Act builds upon this effort by addressing longer-term threats. The bill has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, but has not reached the floor of the House, or Senate for debate.

The Congressmen also looked first hand at the Chicago River locks, the south lakeshore shoreline and Calumet Harbor - all areas that would be addressed by the new legislation.